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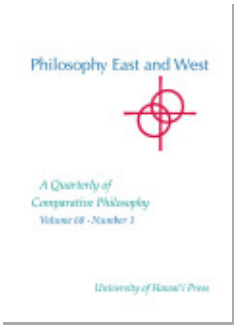

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TRANSMITTING THE SAGE'S "HEART" (I): UNSEALING MORAL AUTONOMY—INTELLECTUAL INTUITION AND MOU ZONGSAN'S RECONSTRUCTION OF THE "CONTINUITY OF THE WAY" *(DAOTONG)*

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A major figure in New Confucianism,[1] Mou Zongsan 牟宗三 (1909–1995) is often considered one of the most important thinkers of twentieth-century China. His philosophical work he labeled "moral metaphysics," a caption inspired by Kant's term "moral theology," marking, at one and the same time, both an homage to and a disapproval of the German philosopher's work. In Mou's view, Kant, unable to come up with a convincing solution to the problem of integrating practical and theoretical philosophy, fails to provide a viable notion of the "Highest Good" *(summum bonum).*[2] Mou's own proposal to emend this alleged deficiency rests on two main pillars: the concept of intellectual intuition and the figure of a "perfect teaching" (*yuanjiao* 圓教).[3] Whereas the former, at least in name, is Kantian itself, the latter is adopted from Buddhist scholastics.

The present essay argues that Mou's choosing to place intellectual intuition at the heart of his philosophy has far-reaching consequences that prepare the ground for the eventual restoration of the authority of tradition: appealing to a personal experience of morality that purportedly evades expression by common propositional language, Mou presents intellectual intuition in a rhetoric of immediacy that he buttresses with the paradoxical architecture of the perfect teaching to invoke a discourse of indisputableness. He intends to talk about something that essentially transcends the realm of linguistic representation: the Way of the sage who in moral practice actually *realizes* the Good—not in his words but in his deeds. I intend to show that neither Mou's attempt to cure Kantianism by admitting intellectual intuition nor his endeavor to explicate Confucianism by translating it into the language of Kant yield convincing results. All the more, the same is true for Mou's ambition to elevate Confucian moral practice to the status of a Kant-inspired "Perfect Good" *(summum bonum),* which is supposed ultimately to reconcile the theory and practice of philosophy. Both its inscrutable content and its invulnerable form thus shield Mou's philosophy against common forms of criticism. Inexpressible in propositional language, its truth is no more a function of what it says but of who says it: construed in a way that defies rational argument, moral metaphysics eventually has to appeal to belief. And as its plausibility escapes rational verification, it invokes the authority of its enunciator: the teacher of the Confucian Way. I therefore conclude that Mou's philosophy can be read as a philosophical rehabilitation of the traditional idea of a

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"continuity of the Way" (*daotong* 道統), a belief held by imperial Confucians that the correct Way is transmitted from an authoritative teacher to his disciple.[4]

A discussion of Mou Zongsan's philosophy requires a short remark on some of the peculiarities of his writings. Mou's philosophy joins traditions as alien to each other as Kantian transcendentalism, the inclusivist classification of doctrines developed in Tiantai Buddhism, and a specific idea of the transmission of the Confucian Way, to name but a few of its most important ingredients. Not only does he frankly combine terms stemming from these extremely different contexts; sometimes he even goes so far as simply to identify them—even if, at times, he may signal that judging from their respective perspectives such a step may appear inadmissible.[5] Mou's tendency to refer to a broad variety of different sources and divergent uses of terms poses particular challenges to any translator, even to any reader, of his works.[6] Yet, although I readily admit that particular translational choices may be suggestive in the sense of favoring one interpretation over another, I am firmly convinced that the problems we encounter in reading Mou are caused not exclusively, not even mainly, by our inadequate translations of particular terms.

Mou's Claim on Kantian Autonomy and Its Consequences for Confucian Doxography

Mou's moral metaphysics owes much to his encounter with Kant's thought, in terms of both its Kantian vocabulary and its understanding of what is the highest aim of philosophy—namely the reconciliation of theoretical and practical reason.

One of Mou's most renowned students, Lee Ming-huei, highlights the tremendous role of Kantianism for Mou's interpretation of *Confucianism* revolving around a Kant-inspired notion of "autonomy."[7] According to Lee, Mou recognizes in the Mencian "heart" or "mind" *(xin)* the "philosophical-anthropological" framework of moral autonomy, as, still in Lee's presentation, this "heart" combines an *a priori* universalism with the unity of both the rational and the emotional.[8] Considering Lee's summary of the core of Mou's moral philosophy, insightful and correct in our view, we notice that Mou agrees with the conventions of imperial Neo-Confucianism[9] when he places the moral judgment of the Mencian "heart" at the core of his teaching. His innovation lies in his interpretation of this "heart" in terms of the philosophical notion of autonomy, a move with substantial and far-reaching consequences for evaluating the correct line of transmission of the Way.

In his endeavor to make Mou's thought accessible to a non-Chinese public—the passage referred to here is taken from a textbook in German—Lee Ming-huei translates its pivotal point into a familiar "Western" philosophical vocabulary: the Mencian "heart" here turns straightaway into the Kantian "moral subject," while the Confucian "moral principle" (*li* 理) is paraphrased by the Kantian expression of the "moral law." This equalization of terms allows Lee, certainly in line with his teacher's intention, to recast the famous phrase *"xin ji li"* 心即理 by the Song Confucian Lu Jiuyuan 陸九淵 (Xiangshan 象山) (1139–1193) in terms of eighteenth-century European moral philosophy, rendering it as "a unity of the moral subject and the moral

law."[10] In the light of this interpretation of the Mencian "heart," Lu Xiangshan's motto suddenly appears as a claim of the moral autonomy of the subject: the "principle" to be found inside his or her genuine heart or mind is the moral law. If the principles of moral action do not exclusively arise from our moral consciousness, or—in Lee's much more suggestive Kantian paraphrase—if moral law does not arise from the moral subject, then this implies an outright heteronomy.[11] Precisely this flaw in Mou's view afflicts the competing "orthodox" school of Cheng Yi 程頤 (1033–1107) and Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200), which rejects the idea that our moral consciousness directly discovers these "principles" within itself, and instead argues that it only detects them in our engagement with the external world.[12] Mou's application of the Kantian notion of autonomy to the Mencian "heart," however problematic and controversial[13] in itself, elevates moral autonomy to the essence of the teaching of Confucius and the touchstone of its correct transmission. He provides what appears to be a *philosophical* criterion for reconstructing a *doctrinal* continuity.[14]

This spelling-out of Mencian anthropology with the vocabulary of Kant proves double-edged. Glossing Confucian terms with Kantian concepts, Mou weaves a delicate texture of mutual correspondences and equivalences imbuing Kantian terms with a Confucian aura and vesting Kantian distinctions into the linguistic garment of Neo-Confucianism. However, renouncing comment on this process and its consequences, Mou leaves the intricate philosophical problems of such an equalization of Confucian and Kantian terms largely unaddressed.[15] As he leaves implicit the exact relationship between the two conceptual worlds, his hybrid Confucian-Kantian terminology inherits a significant lack of definition. The resulting ambiguity doubtless is calculated, as it is indispensable for Mou's erection of his lofty conceptual constructions. Yet, in the attempt to naturalize Kantian "moral autonomy" to Mencianism, this procedure patently fails. Mou here unwittingly thwarts the very property for which he holds Kantianism in so high esteem: in the process of its appropriation, "moral autonomy" loses both the a prioricity and universal validity of its Kantian model.[16]

Mou's notion of "intellectual intuition" is designed precisely to warrant our insight into this moral autonomy.[17] However, allegedly a practical experience of the lived body, intellectual intuition is said to escape conceptual thought and propositional language. It can only be alluded to in the metaphorizing rhetoric of paradox. Mou's approach, therefore, renders his talk on autonomy ultimately inscrutable, at least conceptually.[18] The philosophical rampart he erects hermeticizes and mystifies his thought and eventually undermines its ability to speak in its own right. It is precisely this internalization and resulting incommunicability of moral autonomy that paves the way to the restoration of the *daotong*. The need to invoke the authority of the sage hence clearly responds to exigencies systematically brought about by the alleged content and particular design of Mou's philosophy.

Paradoxically—though possibly not inadvertently—Mou's strategy to recast the Confucian tradition in terms of critical philosophy results in its immunization against any familiar forms of criticism: whatever Mou finds with Kantian philosophy, it is quite obvious that it is not its universal call for critical evaluation that attracts him. In contrast to others,[19] I do not think that Mou failed to grasp the essentials of Kantian

critique. I simply think that it just might have been a different aspect of Kantianism that aroused Mou's interest: the promise that it restrains the pretensions of theoretical reason and hence determines the limits of objective knowledge all by "making room for faith."[20] While Mou appreciated Kant's primacy of practical over theoretical reason, he simply refused to accept that critique cannot allow for any refuges inaccessible to its universal call for rational justification, and that providing such resorts undermines the very basis of the critical project.

Intellectual Intuition and Moral Practice

In Mou's view, pre-modern Confucians in their engagement in moral cultivation have actually experienced in their very practice an awareness of the "moral norm" (*li* 理) imparted to them by their human nature.[21] Their documents therefore bear witness to the truth that human beings indeed can have an intuitive insight into the fundamental reality of their moral autonomy—or, in Mou's terms, humans can have "intellectual intuition."[22] However, Mou is aware that the mere *appeal* to the authority of traditional writings along with his claim that these are to be read as documenting "intellectual intuition" are hardly convincing for those who either do not blindfoldedly accept tradition's authority or doubt that Mou's resort to this notion is an appropriate approach to these texts. He therefore sees the duty to substantiate his core claim that humans can have intellectual intuition, a task he has to fulfill on two different levels: that it is necessary for humans to be capable of intellectual intuition has to be established both in theoretical[23] and in practical[24] respects.

Stipulating the Theoretical Necessity of Intellectual Intuition

At the beginning of his discussion of moral intuition, Mou invokes the language of Kantianism to define morality as "acting according to the unconditional categorical imperative."[25] This categorical imperative, according to Kant, is emitted by our free will, a concept that Mou glosses with a number of Confucian terms like "genuine heart" (*benxin* 本心), "essential humanity" (*renti* 仁體), and "genuine knowledge" *(liangzhi).*[26] He holds that all these various expressions coincide in pointing to the "transcendental foundation of moral action," which constitutes the "nature" *(xing)* of the human being.[27] In an attempt to explain why the categorical imperative arises from free will, Mou writes that "only if it is like this, its [= of the free will] imperative becomes something unconditioned and categorical. And this is what Confucians designate as that which essential substance commands (*xingti zhi suo ming* 性體之所命)."[28]

Mou, eventually replacing the Kantian term of the free will by its alleged Confucian equivalent, goes on to state that "if essential substance were a limited concept, it would be impossible that the imperative that it [= essential substance] emits would not be [somehow] restricted."[29] Mou here appeals to Kant's notion of categoricity,[30] which excludes calling categorical an imperative emitted by something that is itself conditioned. It is essential to the action commanded by the categorical imperative

that it is executed *exclusively* because it is good. Would it be conditioned, it would depend on causes other than its being good. For Mou, the possibility of a categorical imperative hence requires the possibility of an unconditioned Good. Without the categorical imperative, the unconditioned Good with its various designations ("nature," "essential substance," "free will," "moral law") would forfeit its potential to guide our actions. Genuinely good actions would prove impossible. Therefore, the categorical imperative is a viable concept only if acting good is really possible. And if good actions can actually be realized, then the unconditioned Good as their exclusive source must be real, too.

Under its functional aspect as the "transcendental foundation" of our human nature, Mou calls this unconditioned and hence absolute Good by names like "nature" *(xing)* and "essential substance" *(xingti).* When viewed from the normative perspective of determining our actions, he identifies it with the moral law—which, we remember, he equalizes to the Confucian "moral principle" *(li).* If, thus, the unconditioned foundation would be impossible, the "autonomy"[31] of the moral law would be mere illusion.[32] Mou, aware that something unconditioned or absolute cannot be grasped in what Kant calls discursive language, considers the reality of the moral action as proof to the reality of this absolute: intellectual intuition, the treasure of the Confucian tradition, in this view, is the key disclosing to us what we cannot recognize in conceptual terms. Our personal awareness, at some point, of *really* acting morally testifies to the *actual reality* of the unconditioned Good.

That the absolute Good can be witnessed through one's moral actions is thus precisely what the Confucian tradition of the "learning of the heart" is thought to warrant. It is from the vantage point of moral autonomy that the theoretical necessity that Mou invokes arises: assuming that the categorical imperative indeed has any bearing on our concrete actions presupposes the reality of its unconditioned source. This reality, however, cannot be conceived as the existence of an object that causes good action, as such an integration of the unconditioned Good into the realm of natural causality would presuppose its undue reification. It is precisely for this reason that it cannot be recognized theoretically, but only experienced practically. However, this practical experience is nothing else than the concrete action prompted by the categorical imperative. If this latter is to be a reality—and Mou is convinced that it is—one has to be able to recognize that a particular action is indeed triggered by it. And as the reality of this good action by the very concept of categoricity could not be caused by anything else than an unconditioned Good, this latter appears as a theoretical necessity. If the concept of categoricity therefore is to be more than mere figurative speech, *what cannot be recognized theoretically still has to be assumed on theoretical grounds.*

The essential character of the categorical imperative, presupposing the unconditioned Good that emits it, can only be disclosed to us in intellectual intuition, our spontaneous awareness in acting that what we are doing indeed *is* good. For this reason, intellectual intuition precisely by allowing us to capture the goodness of our actions equally testifies to the reality of the absolute Good. On theoretical grounds the "verification" of the reality of the categorical imperative, not recognizable

theoretically, must be grasped in another way. And this way is our practical experience *in actu* of the good disclosed by intellectual intuition. The reality of morality amounts to the reality of the categorical imperative, and the reality of the categorical imperative presupposes intellectual intuition as our only possible means to verify it.

Anchoring autonomy in moral feeling, which seems to appear to him as the rock-solid ground of one of the most basic human experiences, instead of conceiving it in terms of what he considers mere conceptual speculation ultimately detached from the concrete reality of human life, Mou in a way suggests to place Kant back on his feet. Yet, even if we can reconstruct Mou's argument it becomes clear that his understanding of "moral autonomy" fundamentally departs from Kant,[33] for whom pure reason implies the necessary *idea* of a "causa noumenon," an unconditioned cause. Yet, as ideas of reason cannot find any evidence in objective knowledge, which relies on understanding and sensible intuition, they can only be of a regulative use. Pure reason is the "ratio cognoscendi" of the free will: reason makes available, in fact even requires, the thought of a first cause. At the same time, however, it makes it clear that there is no way of objectively recognizing such a cause. Nonetheless it obliges the empirical subject, which recognizes itself as a natural and hence heteronomously conditioned being, to *think* of free will as a *causa noumenon* of its actions, as by virtue of being a rational being it has the duty to act in accordance with reason. Without delving into the odds and ends of Kantian critique, we can recognize that Mou's concern *to anchor the reality of the free will in an existential sense* is entirely alien to Kant's notion of the free will.[34]

Even more problematic is Mou's attempt to achieve this goal by claiming the possibility of intellectual intuition. Unlike Mou's insinuation, Kant's reason for holding that humans lack it most definitely is *not* that the Christian tradition of an anthropomorphic God hindered him from doing so. Kant's God is an ideal resulting from one of the ideas of pure reason, one of the notions of totality required by reason's inherent structure; and it is, at the same time, a postulate of practical reason.[35] Thus, there is no claim that God exists. Kant's position rather comes down to not much more than the requirement that we act *as if* God existed. It is essential to the Kantian critique that the realms of nature and morality are heterogeneous and that we cannot know about a real unity of both in the sense of the transcendental foundation allegedly provided by what Mou terms our moral "nature" *(xing)* or "essential substance" *(xingti).*[36]

The Practical Necessity of Intellectual Intuition

In his motivation of a practical necessity of intellectual intuition, Mou entirely leaves the confines of Kantianism. Trying to provide what he calls a "positive" notion of intellectual intuition, he presents three different aspects of it: the first pertains to its experience from the perspective of the empirical, that is, "unenlightened" subject;[37] the second refers to its being witnessed, in moral acting, from within;[38] and the third eventually relates to its cosmological dimension.[39]

At one point, Mou compares the first aspect of intellectual intuition to a light projected into our limited human lives by the unlimited heart[40]—arising as what we experience as a moral feeling, it urges us to action. As it often pushes against our habits and routines, we tend to experience it as untimely, and we may even feel extremely reluctant to follow its guidance. Directing our attention to the distress and need for help of the people next to us, it is also a bitter experience bringing to our consciousness the suffering of the world. What is more, the lucid moments of moral clarity flashing up in intellectual intuition pass by. There may well be a theoretically infinite approximation to the absolute moral heart that is the source of that light. The source itself, however, remains out of reach. In approximating the unlimited heart, we are said to progress in leaps, from one moment of illumination to the next. In this process we thus reach what Mou terms ever higher degrees of "intensity" (*qiangdu* 強度) of moral alertness.

The second aspect of intellectual intuition refers to the very moment of our enactment of the moral law. Here, the sorrow and distress of ourselves and our neighbor give way to the experience of happiness brought along by the certainty of partaking in realizing what is right and good. For a moment, the cleavages and conflicts characterizing our daily environment are suspended. Mou characterizes this intellectual intuition "from within" as a "qualitative" experience of the infinite heart, which he terms "subjective." During this innermost experience of moral acting, the unlimited heart can indeed be realized in its genuine significance.[41]

The third aspect of intellectual intuition eventually purports that our moral deeds do in fact improve the world, that they possess a creative power that changes the real world of our everyday lives. It guarantees that the sphere of moral practice witnessed in intellectual intuition is indeed connected to the natural world of physical objects.

Although Mou quite consistently sticks to this tripartite schema throughout his discussion of intellectual intuition, he does not actually fill this notion with the positive content he so often boasts. Mou tells us something about the place of intellectual intuition in moral self-cultivation and about the problems of moral agency. But out of all things the purported content of intellectual intuition, the specific values it allegedly discloses, remains sealed off in the externally inscrutable confines of introspection.

Intellectual Intuition and Moral Cultivation

Independently of these difficulties in coming to terms with the specificities of Mou's notion of intellectual intuition, it is clear that he assigns it *the* crucial role in moral self-cultivation. As Mou presents the matter, accessing the genuine heart in flashes of intellectual intuition has a reinforcing effect on our moral improvement. Mou maintains that experiencing moments of intellectual intuition makes us more and more responsive to our moral feeling, turning us into ever more efficient agents of free will.[42] What he does *not* give is an account of how we are able to recognize that, at a certain point, we can be sure that we are indeed intellectually intuiting.

Fortunately, however, Mou provides a concrete example of how he thinks single moral actions are prompted by the genuine heart:

> Moral action coincides with the manifold (*zaduo* 雜多) [of experience], and self-activity (*ziwo huodong* 自我活動) coincides with the activity of the lucid awareness (*mingjue* 明覺) of moral nature.[43] Here, the activity of lucid awareness . . . is one's reflexive awareness (*nijue* 逆覺) that its [= the substantial humaneness of the genuine heart] command urges one to realize without fail (*bu rongyi de* 不容已的) various kinds of actions (*xingshi* 行事).[44]

In this passage, Mou determines "intellectual intuition" not as an awareness *that there is such a substantial humanity,* but rather as an *actual awareness in the very moment of acting that right now one is unconditionally prompted to do so by this substantial humanity.* The phrase captures the experience of being inevitably urged to action in an awareness that acting so is good. It is what Mou elsewhere determines as "genuine" (*zhenzheng de* 真正的) intellectual intuition[45] and what corresponds to the second aspect discussed above.

When Mou illustrates how the genuine heart drives the individual agent to moral action, his examples show the serious difficulties of his conception of intellectual intuition. In a comment on an interpretation of the Mencian "genuine knowledge" *(liangzhi)* by Wang Yangming[46] Mou writes:

> Seeing one's father, one spontaneously knows about filial piety; in view of one's elder brother, one spontaneously knows about one's respect toward his older brother; coming across an unbearable situation, one simply acts, as one cannot bear it; in a shameful situation, one cannot but feel ashamed. All these are virtuous actions (*dexing* 德行) [*sic!*]. In all these cases one obeys the command of the genuine heart's substantial humaneness, and each time these actions are but free spontaneity of the substance of moral nature. Seeing one's father, one shows piety in one's conduct. This is then an action. "Spontaneously to know filial piety" simply means that from the lucid awareness of the genuine heart of substantial humaneness one spontaneously knows that one has to act in a filial manner. In this, the genuine heart emits the imperative that one "needs to be filial." . . . To know filial piety is to be filial. . . . All this is the spontaneous freedom of the substance of moral nature. This free emission of an imperative by substantial moral nature at the same time spontaneously manifests itself in different actions (*xingshi* 行事). It is not a void (*kongxuan* 空懸) imperative.[47]

This illustration of Mou's free will at work confirms our suspicion that his "substantiation" of the "categorical imperative" is at odds with Kant's respective concept. It seems that he pays a heavy price for this adaptation of the original notion. It may well help him to envision a possibility of conceiving of values as being spontaneously disclosed to us in a kind of self-implementing moral behavior. His concluding remarks on the "void" character of Kant's categorical imperative show that he does not appreciate the value of its merely formal character. An ethics based on mutually non-contradictory maxims precisely due to its purely formal design allows individual subjects to formulate their own preferences, all by preserving an overarching principle restricting their freedom and preventing it from turning into arbitrariness. And it

keeps room for the individual subjects to decide on ethical issues. In contrast, freedom in Mou's sense is but *self-causation*. For the empirical subject, this freedom is only available if it is absorbed in the moral substance of the universe. In moral action, the agency of the empirical individual entirely disappears. Moral acts as conceived by Mou in the passage above are quasi-automatically instantiated by a force that is alien to the non-enlightened empirical subject. In a way Mou may thus succeed in saving the idea of substantial values and the traditional morals that propagate them, but he does so at the expense of any viable concept of genuine ethical choice.

For Mou, the empirical self is the effect of a reductionist self-conception.[48] In order to be free it has to sacrifice the illusion of *essentially* being an individual entity opposed to others and to coalesce with actual substance, which by its very spontaneity is free and self-caused. The spontaneous moral act unmasks the reductionist nature of one's empirical self-conception as an individualized self and unveils an awareness of partaking in a moral activity that transcends the allegedly self-imposed and artificial borders of the self. This kind of pure activity is what remains of reality if it is experienced in a way that suspends all the dismembering effects of the differentiating modes of cognition—it is the substantial and essential unity of everything, a unity that according to Mou can only be experienced in the actuality of the moral act.[49]

Summarizing what has so far been said on the ability of human beings to experience intellectual intuition, we can basically distinguish two different modes of how the empirical self is said to be able to access substantial humanity. First, substance can be witnessed in a mode of *reflexive awareness (nijue)*. Second, it can impose itself on the empirical self as a categorical imperative when realizing itself in *spontaneous moral activity*. Both are interrelated in that Mou holds that the power of substance to realize itself in a person's moral activity increases, as his or her experiences of witnessing substance in reflexive awareness multiply. Mou thus presents a doctrine of Confucian self-cultivation partly redressed in the guise of a Kantian vocabulary.[50]

We conclude that occasional contentions[51] that Mou develops his claim for the necessity of intellectual intuition from inside a Kantian framework are untenable.[52] Quite to the contrary, Mou's criticism, rather than accrediting the essential conceptual framework of Kant's approach, involves a downright conflation of a number of distinctions essential to appreciating Kant's argument.[53] Most alarming to Mou should be that by his "substantialization" of the "transcendental" foundation of morality he—possibly unwittingly—tears down the only formally warranted universal and unconditional character of moral autonomy, doubtless one of his most cherished aspects of Kant's system. As that foundation becomes a matter of belief rather than rational argument, Mou unwittingly is trapped back in dogmatism.

Gestures of Authority: Transmitting the Incommunicable

Mou's case is probably less unfavorable with his arguments for the practical necessity of intellectual intuition. It has emerged from the preceding discussion that what Mou

appeals to by this notion is nothing else than the crucial role of moral feeling for acting good. In this he seems to address a genuine problem of Kantianism, one that is comprehensible even without Mou's metaphysical presuppositions: how is genuinely moral, that is, autonomous, action possible if, by our very nature as empirical beings, we are inevitably heteronomously determined? In addressing the problem of the moral feeling in Kant's work as a crucial issue, Lee Ming-huei has thus plausibly identified an aspect of Mou's moral metaphysics that may provide a possible vantage point for a Confucian criticism of Kantian ethics, a concern, Lee emphasizes, shared by the "majority" of German ethicians after Kant.[54] However, granting this point does not affect our observation that Mou's talk on intellectual intuition is marked by a flamboyant lack of content, which, in the worst case, might be interpreted in terms of a strategy to protect traditional values from being critically challenged.

Possibly the most vexing consequence of Mou's interpretation of the moral feeling as intellectual intuition, however, seems to be that the empirical subject—and hence what carries, in his view, the entire apparatus of cognitive representation—is in a sense suspended in moral acting. The empirical subject, thus "turning" into a moral agent, may well intuitively know that what he or she is doing is good. But at the same time, he or she loses the possibility of *understanding* it: if Mou is right, the content of moral consciousness simply evades propositional language and conceptual thought.[55]

Mou's emphasis on the moral feeling reflects a complete internalization not only of our awareness of morality but also of the criteria for whether a particular act can count as good. This leaves moral values and evaluations essentially incommunicable. They prove to be neither verbalizable nor criticizable.[56] As we announced at the beginning, Mou's intellectual intuition hence places the centerpiece of his moral philosophy, the genuine heart and the essential values that it implies, into a space beyond the linguistic, cognitive, and conceptual reach of the empirical subject. Intellectual intuition and what it unveils become something entirely esoteric and can only be shared with the outsider by means of testimony or confession.

Bereft of any means to actually understand, let alone critically verify, what the insider, the Confucian, is telling him, the validity of the testimony for the outsider moves from the content of the claim to the person uttering it. In this way, intellectual intuition is pivotal for restoring the authority of the teacher and of the traditional interpretation of the continuity of the Way.

What is more, only if we assume that the Confucian teacher *knows in a fundamentally different way* than we do—not only about himself but also about his counterpart—and that his student, too, has the ability to access this different way of knowing, can we conceive of a viable concept of the transmission of the Way: the first condition warrants that the teacher is in possession of a criterion not only for deciding whether he himself is actually intellectually intuiting, but also for judging if his vis-à-vis, too, is partaking in this experience of intellectual intuition. The second one guarantees that the student is in a position to understand what his teacher means when he accords to him the ability to engage correctly in intellectual intuition. Although we have to suspect such a way of communication, we must at the same time

accept that it has to remain unintelligible for us as long as we do not have intellectual intuition ourselves. As outsiders we either simply believe that there is something essential in talking about intellectual intuition and its transmission, or we refuse to accept this kind of arcane communication, which necessarily remains senseless for us.

Or, to adopt a remark by Schopenhauer on Schelling's philosophy of identity: for those who lack intellectual intuition all expositions about it "must remain as a book sealed with seven seals."[57]

Notes

1 – My use of this term follows John Makeham, ed., *New Confucianism: A Critical Examination* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), p. 1, and John Makeham, *Lost Soul: Confucianism in Contemporary Chinese Academic Discourse* (Cambridge, MA, and London: Harvard University Press, 2008), p. 1.

2 – Kant shows that the concept of the *summum* (Höchstes) implies an ambiguity between the "supreme" (Oberstes, *supremum*) and the "perfect" (Vollendetes, *consummatum*), the former being the condition that is itself unconditioned *(originarium),* the latter referring to a totality that is not itself part of yet another totality of the same kind *(perfectissimum)* (see Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft,* in *Immanuel Kant Werke in sechs Bänden,* vol. 6 (Wiesbaden: Insel Verlag, 1956), p. 238 [KpV A 198]); for the English terms cf. Thomas Kingsmill Abbott, trans., *Critique of Practical Reason and Other Works on the Theory of Ethics* (London and Dublin: Longmans and Co., 1889), p. 118. Mou uses the Chinese term *yuanshan* 圓善 for Kant's *summum bonum.* In view of the symmetry to his term of a "perfect teaching" (*yuanjiao* 圓教), I use the English term "perfect good" for Kant's "Höchstes Gut," although there is an established convention of rather using the Latin *summum bonum,* i.e., "Highest Good." I thank an anonymous reviewer for bringing the symmetry of the Chinese terms to my attention.

3 – For a detailed account of Mou's discussion of this Buddhist notion see Jason Clower, *The Unlikely Buddhologist: Tiantai Buddhism in Mou Zongsan's New Confucianism* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), pp. 136–155; on Mou's creative adoption for his own purposes of the "Perfect Theory"—Clower's translation of *"yuanjiao"*—see Clower, ibid., pp. 181–189, 191–207.

4 – According to Makeham, Mou distinguishes two senses of *daotong,* one referring to the general cultural continuity of Chinese culture since its mythical beginnings, the other specifically defined in terms of Confucius' doctrine of humaneness or benevolence. See John Makeham, "The New *Daotong,*" in Makeham, *New Confucianism,* pp. 55–78. Mou's emphasis, in my view, doubtless lies on the latter. The former is only relevant because it prepared the ground for Confucius' insight into the moral nature of the Way and the tradition

following him. This points toward an inner tension in Mou's argument: the contribution of Chinese culture, tantamount to Confucianism for him, to a future world culture is an insight into something both universally valid and intellectually intuitable. Strictly speaking, the value of Chinese culture for him thus clearly can only be derivative from the fact that it had been the cradle and the locus of transmission of that insight that is valid for and, at least in principle, accessible to all human beings.

5 – Cf., e.g., Mou Zongsan, *Xianxiang yu wuzishen* (Taibei: Xuesheng Shuju, 1990), "Xu" (Preface), where, on p. 16, he suggests that Kant's "free will," Confucian "innate knowledge of the Good" (*liangzhi* 良知), the Daoists' "empty and quiet heart" (*xuyi er jing de dao xin* 虛一而靜的道心—the expression itself is taken from *Xunzi* chap. 21), and the "pure mind of *svabhāva*" (*zixing qingjing xin* 自性清淨心) in the Buddhist *Tathāgatagarbha-sūtra* equally belong to the "level of substance" (*bentijie de* 本體界的) and hence point out one and the same thing in spite of their peculiar linguistic form.

6 – On this, see Clower, *The Unlikely Buddhologist,* p. 241.

7 – "[T]he most significant aspect of Mou's reception of Kant is probably this reception's influence on the interpretation of Confucianism." See Lee Ming-huei, *Der Konfuzianismus im modernen China* (Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 2001), p. 72. Contrary to this, N. Serina Chan claims that Mou's understanding of Confucianism was not substantially influenced by Kant (N. Serina Chan, *The Thought of Mou Zongsan* [Leiden: Brill, 2011], p. 227), something which does not prevent her from maintaining about his idea of "an actual unity of virtue and happiness" that this "synthesis is to a great extent an antithesis of Kant's thought" (p. 156).

8 – Lee, *Der Konfuzianismus im modernen China,* p. 72.

9 – I am aware of the problems regarding the appropriateness of this term. As the present article is not concerned with its use in late imperial China, but rather with its appropriation by a twentieth-century thinker, I use it in the very general sense of Makeham, *New Confucianism,* p. 1, and Makeham, *Lost Soul,* p. 1.

10 – Lit. "unity of the moral subject and the moral law" (Einheit des moralischen Subjekts und des Sittengesetzes); see Lee, *Der Konfuzianismus im modernen China,* p. 72. See also Olf Lehmann, *Zur moralmetaphysischen Grundlegung einer konfuzianischen Moderne* (Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 2003), p. 61 n. 112; Olf Lehmann, "Kritik als Konstruktion bei Mou Zongsan, Oder: Was kostet Zhu Xi den Thron?" in *Kritik im alten und modernen China,* ed. Heiner Roetz (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2006), pp. 251–271, 257; Hans Rudolf Kantor, *Die Heilslehre im Tiantai-Denken des Zhiyi (538–597) und der philosophische Begriff des 'Unendlichen' bei Mou Zongsan (1909–1995)* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1999), p. 446.

11 – See Lehmann, *Zur moralmetaphysischen Grundlegung einer konfuzianischen Moderne,* p. 183, and Lehmann, "Kritik als Konstruktion bei Mou Zongsan," pp. 262, 265: "Mou thinks that he has to break away from Zhu Xi, because he can no more break away from Kant."

12 – See Lehmann, "Kritik als Konstruktion bei Mou Zongsan," p. 263. Lehmann calls Mou's maneuver of redefining Confucian "orthodoxy" against Zhu Xi a "usurpation of tradition the closest precedent of which one probably finds in Zhu Xi himself."

13 – Olf Lehmann argues that Mou's claim to Kantian transcendentalism is "illegitimate." See Lehmann, *Zur moralmetaphysischen Grundlegung einer konfuzianischen Moderne,* p. 36.

14 – This has been emphasized by Olf Lehmann, writing somewhat hyperbolically: "The Confucian text does not ask (non-rhetorical) questions. All it does is to struggle for ever more adequate articulations of what remains eternally the same and what is no more in need of debate" (Lehmann, "Moderner Konfuzianismus zwischen 'Lehre' und 'Argumentation'," in *Der Konfuzianismus: Ursprünge—Entwicklungen—Perspektiven,* ed. Ralf Moritz et al. [Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 1998], pp. 196–215, 203). For Lehmann, the normativity of the "genuine" tradition as proposed by Mou manifests itself as "philosophical homogeneity" (see Lehmann, "Kritik als Konstruktion bei Mou Zongsan," p. 261), a view that ignores that there is more to Mou's claim than the merely "formal" aspect of "homogeneity."

15 – With respect to Mou's endeavor to reconstruct traditional Confucianism in the entirely different language of Kantianism, Stephan Schmidt speaks about "translation qua equalization"; see Stephan Schmidt, "Mou Zongsan, Hegel, and Kant: The Quest for Confucian Modernity," *Philosophy East and West* 61, no. 2 (2011): 260–302, 263. It is not the fact that Mou applies Kantian or other non-Chinese philosophical vocabularies to elucidate traditional Chinese thought that I consider problematic. My difficulty with Mou is that he largely renounces making explicit the conceptual consequences both for the Kantian and the traditional Confucian (and Buddhist, as for this) terms and concepts he brings into play.

16 – A discussion of the Kantian notion of the *a priori* and its fundamental difference from the notion of innateness is presented by Schmidt, "Mou Zongsan, Hegel, and Kant: The Quest for Confucian Modernity," p. 265.

17 – Hans-Rudolf Kantor judges Mou's adaptation of the Kantian term of "intellectual intuition" as outright "revisionist." See Hans-Rudolf Kantor, *Die Heilslehre im Tiantai-Denken des Zhiyi,* pp. 438, 443, 451.

18 – Lehmann holds the opposite view. He claims that by translating the basic assumptions of Confucianism into the conceptual language of philosophy, Mou turns Confucianism into a "post-Kantian" philosophy, making Confucian claims

explicit and hence open to criticism. See Lehmann, *Zur moralmetaphysischen Grundlegung einer konfuzianischen Moderne,* p. 34. Doubting that this was Mou's intention, I fully agree that it is one of the inadvertent consequences of his "philosophization" of Confucianism.

19 – Although Mou's *grasp* of Kantian concepts is not itself an issue in Olf Lehmann's work, he argues that many of the alleged ambiguities that Mou detects in Kant's arguments result from Mou's presentation rather than from the German philosopher's theses themselves—leaving open the question whether this distortion is intended or an inadvertent consequence of Mou's limited understanding of Kant (Lehmann, *Zur moralmetaphysisischen Grundlegung einer konfuzianischen Moderne,* p. 249). For Lehmann, Mou was aware that Kantian critique entails a fundamental criticism of metaphysics (Metaphysikkritik) but simply refused to accept this consequence (see, e.g., Lehmann, ibid., p. 57). When Lehmann discusses Mou's references to Hegel, he states that "if compared to studying Kant, understanding Hegel is a challenge of another dimension, 'not only' for Chinese (but, one can assume, for Chinese in particular [gerade auch])"—implicitly suggesting that understanding Kant, just as with Hegel, is a challenge to Chinese too, presumably also for Mou Zongsan. Hans-Rudolf Kantor in *Die Heilslehre im Tiantai-Denken des Zhiyi* (p. 441), remarks that Mou *"errs"* when he equalizes Kant's opposition of the noumenal and the phenomenal with the Buddhist distinction of a relative *(sudi)* versus an absolute truth *(zhendi).* Notwithstanding the correctness of this claim, the use of the verb "to err" suggests that Kantor implies that Mou was *not aware* that what he was doing runs counter to the original sense of these two sets of antonyms. The same is true for Kantor's statement that Mou *"trivializes"* Kant's claim of the primacy of practical over theoretical reason (see Kantor, ibid., p. 444). Deng Xiaomang discusses Mou's misunderstanding of various Kantian concepts: "transcendentality" versus "transcendence" in Deng Xiaomang, "Mou Zongsan dui Kangde zhi wudu juyao (zhi yi)" (Essential misunderstandings of Kant by Mou Zongsan [part I]), in Deng Xiaomang, *Kangde zhu wenti* (Beijing: Sanlian Shudian, 2006), pp. 271–297; and "intellectual intuition," in Deng Xiaomang, "Mou Zongsan dui Kangde zhi wudu juyao (zhi er)" (Essential misunderstandings of Kant by Mou Zongsan [part II]), in Deng, *Kangde zhu wenti,* pp. 297–318. These essays are included in Deng Xiaomang, *Xinrujia lunli xin pipan* (Chongqing: Chongqing Daxue Chubanshe, 2010), pp. 169–189, 189–210, where he adds an essay on the concept of the "thing-in-itself" (pp. 210–226) and one on "self" and "consciousness" (pp. 226–257).

20 – See KrV B xxx: "I have therefore found it necessary to deny *knowledge,* in order to make room for *faith*" (Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Norman Kemp Smith [London: Macmillan and Co., 1929], p. 29).

21 – Mou casually identifies *li* 理, the moral norm of the Confucian tradition, with Kant's "reason," whose Chinese equivalent, the neologism *lixing* 理性, contains the same word *li* as its component.

22 – Cf. Schmidt, "Mou Zongsan, Hegel, and Kant: The Quest for Confucian Modernity," p. 264.

23 – Mou Zongsan, *Zhi de zhijue yu Zhongguo zhexue* (Taibei: Taiwan Shangwu Yinshuguan, 2000), p. 190.

24 – Ibid.

25 – Ibid.

26 – To my knowledge, he first did so in a monograph dedicated to questions of logic—*Luoji dianfan,* edited in 1940—which contains a short section on Kant's transcendental dialectics. Letters show that he discussed this identification of Kantian concepts with Neo-Confucian terms with his teacher Xiong Shili, and that the latter eventually approved it. See Rafael Suter, "'New Confucianism' and the Sinicization of Metaphysics and Transcendentalism: Conceptualizations of Philosophy in the Early Works of Xiong Shili and Mou Zongsan," sect. 4 ("Bridging the Gap between East and West: Mou Zongsan and the Kantian Affinities of Eastern Learning").

27 – Mou, *Zhi de zhijue yu Zhongguo zhexue,* p. 190.

28 – Ibid., p. 191.

29 – Ibid.

30 – Kant takes the term "categorical" from his theory of relations. Here, it stands for the relation of a subject to its predicate. It is opposed to "hypothetical" judgments (expressing the relation of a reason to its consequence) and to "disjunctive" judgments (expressing the relation of an element of a concept to the concept that contains it) (Kant, *Logik,* § 23, in *Kant Werke,* vol. 3 [Wiesbaden: Insel Verlag, 1958], pp. 419–582, at p. 535). The analogy of the categorical judgment to the categorical imperative is rather transparent: anything that is "good" has to be done exclusively due to this predicate. No other reason has to be given. As it does not depend on anything else, the modality of this imperative is necessity.

31 – Mou, *Zhi de zhijue yu Zhongguo zhexue,* p. 191.

32 – Ibid., p. 192.

33 – Lehmann in a somewhat scathing remark speaks about an "ontological trivialization" of the Kantian idea of autonomy. See Lehmann, *Zur moralmetaphysischen Grundlegung einer konfuzianischen Moderne,* p. 58, and Lehmann, "Kritik als Konstruktion bei Mou Zongsan," p. 257. Kantor uses this term with respect to Mou's interpretation of the relation between practical and theoretical reason; see Kantor, *Die Heilslehre im Tiantai-Denken des Zhiyi,* p. 444.

34 – For Kantor, this is related to Mou's misinterpretation of Kant's priority of the practical re-interpreted as a primacy "in an existential sense" of the immediacy

of the moral consciousness of freedom over any interest in theoretical knowledge. See Kantor, *Die Heilslehre im Tiantai-Denken des Zhiyi,* p. 444.

35 – Lehmann condenses Mou's critical stance on Kant's notion of God into his remark that "Mou accepts the practical, 'secondary foundation' of God's existence, but not its [= this secondary foundation's] preconditions developed in the first 'Critique,' i.e. he does not [adopt] the 'primary foundation' [of God] as an *ideal* in terms of an *idea* of *reason,* and of *morality* in the *form* of the [moral] *law,*" calling this a "systematic misrepresentation (Verzeichnung) of transcendental philosophy." See Lehmann, Zur *moralmetaphysischen Grundlegung einer konfuzianischen Moderne,* p. 110 n. 266.

36 – Again, I do not think that there is much to be gained from squabbling about the question whether or not Mou actually has understood Kantianism. As I mentioned above, I believe that he did—at least better than many critics (like Lehmann, Kantor, Schmidt, Deng Xiaomang) admit.

37 – Mou is consistent in identifying the substantial heart as the bearer or agent of intellectual intuition. Properly speaking it is not the "I" who, in a moment of intellectual intuition, realizes a self-conscious moral act. Rather it is the moral heart itself that activates or arouses itself (*ziwo zhendong* 自我震動); see Mou, *Xianxiang yu wuzishen,* pp. 78–79. In *Zhi de zhijue yu Zhongguo zhexue* (p. 196), Mou speaks about intellectual intuition in terms of a "lucid activity of the substantial humanity of the fundamental heart itself" (*benxin renti zishen zhi mingjue huodong* 本心仁體自身之明覺活動). Although Mou does not regard empirical knowledge and the empirical subject that is said to be its bearer as outright illusionary, he clearly regards them as secondary with respect to the "fundamental heart" and its "genuine knowledge of the good," the empirical self arising from what Mou calls the latter's "self-negation" (*ziwo kanxian* 自我坎陷).

38 – Mou here uses the difficult expression *nijue* 逆覺. For this term, translated "retrospective verification" by Billioud, see the latter's discussion in chap. 6 of Sébastien Billioud, *Thinking through Confucian Modernity: A Study of Mou Zongsan's Moral Metaphysics* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2011), pp. 215–218. The term is situated in Mou's "theory" of moral cultivation. Billioud in his discussion mainly refers to texts belonging to Mou's so-called mature work. In Suter, "'New Confucianism' and the Sinicization of Metaphysics and Transcendentalism," sect. 5 ("Mou Zongsan's Notion of 'Philosophy' in his *Critique of Cognitive Mind*: Similarities and Dissimilarities to Xiong"), I discuss the term *ni* as opposed to *shun* as it appears in the preface of Mou's *Critique of Cognitive Mind (Renshixin zhi pipan),* proposing that Mou, in spite of crediting "traditional" Chinese thought for this distinction, in fact adopts a similar opposition established by Zhang Dongsun. Mou here terms the ordinary way of thinking of the world in terms of *objects* and their relations as "going with the flow," or *shun,* whereas the opposite direction of self-reflection assumed to disclose both the transcendental *subject* and transcendent *substance* is called "turning against

the flow," or *ni*. This approximation of the notions of "subject" and "substance" might help explain the difficulty of finding a precise equivalent for *ni*. What is essential to its meaning is that it is thought to express an inversion of the direction of one's ordinary thinking—turning away from the objects, back to the subject and/or substance. In principle, it seems that this "turn" can happen both in conscious contemplation or, inadvertently, by one's being strongly urged to moral action by the moral heart—identified by Mou as what he calls substance.

39 – For this tripartition see, e.g., Mou, *Zhi de zhijue yu Zhongguo zhexue,* pp. 198–200. The cosmological dimension of intellectual intuition Mou calls *juerun* 覺潤, "saturating awareness." It means that moral acts realized in intellectual intuition imbue the world with value. This is tantamount to saying that a self-caused (i.e., not heteronomous) moral act has a creative power and influences what appears to us as the real world of objects. At a somewhat unexpected place, namely in his *Prajñā and Buddhatva (Foxing yu bore),* Mou claims that the entirety of causal chains, as which we conceive the natural world, rests on the "spontaneous" (*zifaxing* 自發性) creativity of intellectual intuition (Mou, *Foxing yu bore* [Taibei: Xuesheng Shuju, 1977], p. 1011). He speaks here about a "fundamental substance" (*jiti* 基體) that transcends sensibility as the bearer of intellectual intuition.

40 – Mou, *Foxing yu bore,* pp. 1016–1018.

41 – Ibid.

42 – Mou, *Zhi de zhijue yu Zhongguo zhexue,* p. 197.

43 – A literal translation could just as well oppose here two subjects of activity: the self on the one hand and substance and nature on the other. In what follows it will become clear that such a translation can be misleading if it is interpreted in a way suggesting that the two subjects are entities. Rather, it is clear from Mou's epistemology that both the "self" and any notion of a hypostatized "substance" are the result of cognitive constructions—rather than proper agents. I think that we have to read this passage in the sense that it is in moral activity that one becomes aware that what one took to be one's own self dissolves. This activity itself is the underlying unity of the cosmos—both its substance, as it is what remains after all individualizing and hence truncating activity of the cognitive mind is suspended, and its creativity, as it is the *natura naturans,* because it is through moral activity that the world of things—the *natura naturata*—is changed into a better place.

44 – Mou, *Zhi de zhijue yu Zhongguo zhexue,* p. 198: "德行即雜多, 自我活動即性體之明覺活動. 在此, 明覺之活動 . . . 乃是逆覺其命令之不容已地要見諸行事."

45 – Mou, *Foxing yu bore,* p. 1013.

46 – *Chuanxilu,* I, no. 8; see *Instructions for Practical Living,* trans. Wing-tsit Chan (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963), p. 15.

47 – Mou, *Zhi de zhijue yu Zhongguo zhexue,* p. 197.

48 – He famously conceives of the object-oriented mind as the result of a "self-negation" (*ziwo kanxian* 自我坎陷) of the substantial heart and its genuine knowledge. As Mou puts it, "the lucid awareness" of "substantial knowledge (*zhiti* 知體)" "has consciously to negate itself . . . and to turn into understanding (*zhixing* 知性)"; see Mou, *Xianxiang yu wuzishen,* p. 122, and also pp. 123–124.

49 – Weimin Shi and Liu Chiulo have captured this experience with the English term "crossing over." See Weimin Shi and Chiulo Lin, "Confucian Moral Experience and Its Metaphysical Foundation: From the Point of View of Mou Zongsan," *Philosophy East and West* 65, no. 2 (2015): 542–566. I have elsewhere based myself on Mou's early writings suggesting how an individual's becoming aware of the tension between his or her being an empirical "limited" self and, at the same time, a "genuine" unlimited self—a self able to conceive of his or her actions as transcending these narrow limits and the motives hinging on them—might be interpreted as conducive to a moral practice of self-cultivation. See Rafael Suter, "Moral und symbolgeleitete Praxis—Erkenntniskritik und ethische Kultivierung im Frühwerk Mou Zongsans," in *Dimensionen der Selbstkultivierung: Beiträge des Forums für Asiatische Philosophie,* ed. Marcus Schmücker et al. (Freiburg: Karl Alber, 2013), pp. 237–276. Like similar attempts by Stephan Schmidt, this requires not always taking Mou's texts to the letter, especially with respect to traditional notions of metaphysics such as "intellectual intuition," "thing-in-itself," etc. Cf. Stephan Schmidt, "Mou Zongsans moralische Vision," in Schmücker et al., *Dimensionen der Selbstkultivierung,* pp. 277–309, 293–303.

50 – Mou, *Zhi de zhijue yu Zhongguo zhexue,* p. 198.

51 – For a most recent example, see Ming-huei Lee, *Konfuzianischer Humanismus: Transkulturelle Kontexte* (Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, 2014).

52 – Stephan Schmidt somewhat hyperbolically puts it the following way: "*within* the Kantian system [Mou's] argument [that man has intellectual intuition] can only strike one as silly," as such would be a faculty enabling man to see things that do not exist; this is "like arguing for a faculty seeing the corners of a circle." See Stephan Schmidt, "Mou Zongsan, Hegel, and Kant: The Quest for Confucian Modernity," p. 268.

53 – Cf. Kantor, *Die Heilslehre im Tiantai-Denken des Zhiyi,* p. 445.

54 – Lee, *Der Konfuzianismus im modernen China,* p. 72. This fact, however, could also be read *against* Mou. It was obviously not necessary to know about the Chinese tradition in order to be able to recognize and criticize this alleged problem with Kant's thought.

55 – In Mou's view, the reflexive awareness of one's substantial heart does well occur in a state of impurity. But that the substantial heart becomes aware on a

particular occasion does not mean that reflexive awareness is sensible. "The occasion that becomes a restriction" of the fundamental heart, e.g., a toddler's falling into a well, "is sensible," but it is provoked by the "lucid awareness" of our "fundamental heart"—that is, something "purely rational" (Mou, *Zhi de zhijue yu Zhongguo zhexue,* p. 198). In *Xianxiang yu wuzishen* he writes:

> Even if in our sensibility its [= the substantial heart's] influence arises, it shines forth in the midst of constriction and dullness. . . . [I]f once it gets dominant, it can turn the obstacles and hindrances into an open way where sensibility is what it [actively] applies and no more what is hindering it, so that the partial manifestation [of the moral heart] coincides with its total manifestation, and that progressive and immediate realization are no more opposed to each other. (Mou, *Xianxiang yu wuzishen,* p. 82)

This shows that Mou imagines "moral knowledge" as employing "empirical knowledge" as an instrument, the latter being the means by which moral knowledge realizes itself. This means that one can well *describe* what happens in a moral act: one can name the persons involved, describe their interaction, and so on. However, this level entirely belongs to the understanding and its analytical language. Insofar as they are moral, insofar as they are caused by the substantial heart, however, one only can know about these actions through intellectual intuition, and there is no apt language for directly referring to this level of reality.

56 – The *Chuanxilu* records a dialogue between Wang Yangming and Xue Kan that nicely illustrates this problem. Xue desperately asks for criteria to decide whether some action is good or bad. Wang, unable to provide such a criterion, eventually relegates him to asking his own heart or conscience. This speechlessness of the teacher with regard to the guiding moral principle also shows the danger of anomy lingering in this kind of internalization of moral judgments. For a translation see Chan, *Instructions for Practical Living,* pp. 63–65.

57 – Arthur, Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Idea,* Book I, trans. R. B. Haldane and J. Kemp (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner and Co., 1909), pp. 32–33.